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MINORITY WHIP

FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING COMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE NOMINATIONS
COMMITTEE

Testimony before the Labor Committee
March 11, 2010
House Bill 5062

"An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining, Pensions and Health Care"

Chairs Prague and Ryan, Ranking Members Noujaim and Guglielmo and members of the Labor Committee, I am here testify on House Bill 5062, "An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining, Pensions and Health Care."

I applaud the committee's effort to learn more about the status of the state's collective bargaining agreements, pensions, and health care. I hope, however, in our joint effort to create jobs and make it easier to do business in Connecticut, that you will also consider addressing the high costs that our prevailing wage law imposes on public works projects. During these tough economic times, we has a state should be doing all we can to cut costs wherever possible. Modifying our prevailing wage law – if not repealing it outright – would go a long way towards providing our towns, as well as our state, with some economic relief.

We have a real opportunity with the underlying bill to also look at additional ways we can provide our towns some relief. Our prevailing wage law is an unfunded mandate that costs our town millions of dollars. While an outright repeal may not be the desire of this committee, I proposed a number of reforms that could be passed this session.

- A three year moratorium on school and/or transportation projects would be a prudent first step;
- Since our prevailing wage law is a state and federal mandate, we could exempt projects that do not receive federal or state funds;
- At the very least, we should update the thresholds in our prevailing wage law – which are 14 years out of date. The time has come to increase the threshold amounts for rehabilitation and new construction.

If you adopt any of these modest proposals, we could save our towns up to 30% on projects that they would start this year. They in turn would put more people to work by giving our local, smaller companies a opportunity to work on these projects – something they cannot do under the current law.

This committee has considered many different proposals to reform this law in the past, and I was very disappointed to learn that all of my proposals for reform were rejected this year. I sincerely hope that you will reconsider this decision and report out real relief for our towns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.